



Seattle Office for Civil Rights Seattle Commission for Sexual Minorities



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Report: How Healthy Are We Really?

By Joseph Daniels, Commissioner



Health is a major concern for the LGBTQ community. However, even within our community, certain health issues are specific to certain groups. Further, research reveals that

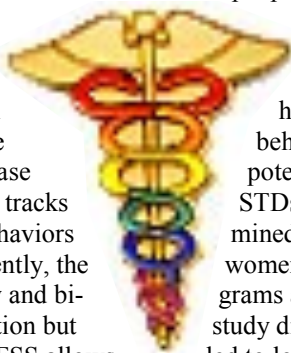
health and wellness disparities exist within the LGBTQ community based on race, class, sex, and gender as examples. The state of LGBTQ health has been difficult to assess, and in part this is due to the exclusion of sexual and gender identities as measures in health research.

The Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey (BRFSS) is one such national survey, and it has been conducted continuously since 1984 by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). The BRFSS tracks health conditions and risk behaviors in the United States, and recently, the BRFSS included lesbian, gay and bisexual demographic information but not gender identity. The BRFSS allows researchers anywhere to analyze LGB responses to the survey, which can provide a better understanding of health and wellness.

In 2008, the University of Washington School of Social Work, Seattle-King County Public Health, and the Seattle Commission for Sexual Minorities released a report using data from the BRFSS for King County, Washington. The report is entitled, "Health Disparities: The Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Health in Seattle and King County." The analysis

conducted by Karen Fredriksen-Goldsen, Ph.D. and her team at the School of Social Work revealed both health strengths and weaknesses amongst LGB community members.

In particular, the report provides insight into behaviors and health care access where some of the key findings are issues that are not discussed as much when it comes to LGB health. When compared to other residents in King County, LGB residents had higher levels of education, cholesterol testing, physical activity and HIV testing. However, the LGB community had higher rates of smoking (1 in 4 LGB people smoke), asthma, mental distress and heavy drinking.



The findings revealed that those 18-24 years old had higher rates of at-risk sexual behavior, which increases the potential for exposure to HIV and STDs. Moreover, it was determined that lesbian and bisexual women had lower rates of mammograms and Pap smears. Finally, the study discovered that lower income led to lower health outcomes.

In order to address these health disparities, several recommendations were formulated including holding community forums to distribute the report findings and expanding the BRFSS to include gender identity and sexual behavior questions. The question remains, "How healthy are we?"

The report suggested that more analysis is needed to understand the diversity of health within the LGBTQ community such as measures along race and ethnicity. However, the report (*cont'd on page 5*)

COMMISSION CALENDAR



Thursday, October 9

Q Hour

Café Metropolitan at 5:30

October 17 – 21

National Gay Men's
Health Summit

October 17 – 26

Seattle Lesbian & Gay
Film Festival

www.seattlequeerfilm.com

Tuesday, October 14

LGBT Caregiver Support Group
www.alzwa.org

Tuesday, November 4

United States General Election
www.metrokc.gov

A Letter from Your Commission Co-Chairs, Eileen and Charlie



*Charlie Butler, Eileen Terry
Commission Co-Chairs*

Welcome to the second newsletter installment of the Seattle Commission for Sexual Minorities. To review, in June of this year, the City of Seattle enjoyed a successful PRIDE parade and festival, with 2008 marking the first year where the numerous City of Seattle parade entries marched together as a single, unified contingent, led by our extremely agile City Council members on Segways! The

Commission was proud of the remarkable turnout at the parade and festival, the weather couldn't have been better, and the parade attendees were full of positive energy and, simply, pride.

The Commission would like to remind our readers that September is national domestic violence awareness month, and we've included several articles in this e-Newsletter to address this important topic. Awareness of violence that can occur between intimate partners, and the rights and responsibilities of affected parties, is incredibly important. According to some research, 25 percent of those in same-sex relationships will experience domestic violence, about the same rate as heterosexual women (*Sigma Research, 2003*). The Commission is committed to increasing intimate partner violence awareness within the City of Seattle as it pertains to the LGBT community. Please

contact the Commission with feedback on this topic to Charlie at his email address: charlie@thebutlerlawgroup.com.

Finally, come November, the Commission would like to remind Seattle residents to vote in our upcoming elections. As representatives of City government in Seattle, we work toward an improved understanding of the power maintained by a single vote. No matter what your affiliation, the importance of registering to vote and casting your ballot cannot be overstated. More information of all kinds regarding voting in Washington may be found at the following website: <http://www.secstate.wa.gov/elections/>.

Eileen Terry

Charlie Butler

Community Connections Unleash "Thought Showers" at Monthly Q Hour

By Charlie Butler, Commission Co-Chair & Aurea Astro, Commissioner

Another successful Q Hour unfolded over martinis with multiple leaders from Seattle's LGBT community. Every second Thursday the Seattle Commission for Sexual Minorities hosts a collaborative "happy hour" event for individuals and groups to support integration and synergy in the local LGBTQ community. So far, so good.

Seattle's Madison Pub and the political homo happy hour group

that meets regularly co-hosted the second Q Hour event of the season, attended by individuals representing several local organizations, including the Capitol Hill Chamber of Commerce, the LGBT Community Center, the University of Washington, and Out in Front. The Commission appreciated the opportunity to be more formally introduced to Out in Front and supports their formalization as a non-profit.

Seattle's Café Metropolitan, now the official meeting site for all subsequent Q-Hours, hosted the third Q Hour event. Though not as well attended, attending commission members found themselves re-addressing the question, "what exactly does the Commission do?" Its mission and vision were debated over what Aurea Astro labeled, "thought showers," corresponding to a parallel movement by the Commission's RAG team to redesign monthly meetings to inspire policy debate and future thought showers.

Q Hour is free of charge, and while the drinks are not hosted, the conversation is lively and worthwhile, to say the least. Q Hour offers an opportunity to meet others in a variety of other organizations throughout the Puget Sound area, and provides the Commission an additional medium to become involved in supporting the efforts of those organizations. The Commission invites the exchange of ideas, business cards, praise, and constructive criticism about the goings on in our Seattle LGBTQ community. Feedback on ways to improve the relationship between the local sexual minority community and City government, including all City departments, officers, and elected officials is welcome.



Allena Gubosch and Wanjiku Gitahi enjoy beverages and thought showering at Café Metropolitan

Commissioner Highlight: Meet Beth Gappert



I'm Beth Gappert, a commissioner since March, 2007. I currently serve as the chair of the Recruitment, Administration and Governance (RAG) Committee. The

RAG committee is responsible for the everyday governance of the commission, so we work on the by-laws, relationships with the City government, and recruitment efforts.

Outside of serving as a commissioner, I am an assistant city attorney for the City of Seattle, and the Precinct Liaison for the Southwest Precinct. When I began law

school, I knew that I wanted to use my education towards improving the lives of same sex couples. I envisioned that I would either spend my career prosecuting domestic violence cases or working on family law and estate planning issues for same sex couples. Immediately after law school, I was hired by the City of Everett to prosecute domestic violence cases. Later, I was hired by the City of Seattle, where I spent several years prosecuting domestic violence and child abuse cases.

I applied to be a commissioner out of self-interest. As I watched same sex couples around the world legally marry one another, I knew that I wanted that here, in my home town, (cont'd on page 5...)

Do You Think Domestic Violence is Prevalent in the LGBT Community?



Yes. My best friend's relationship was a peep-hole into the lesbian community for me. It was a real awakening of what goes on —Santiago.



Yes, but I don't think anyone talks about it. A common perception is that same sex couples don't abuse each other but I think it exists at the same rate as straight couples —Ashley.



Yes. I'm a PFLAG mom and hear about domestic violence in the LGBT community but don't think it's talked about —Carol.



Yes, because it isn't just physical. We don't have models readily available of what is acceptable behavior. It might actually be more prevalent —T Steele.

The Commission: Members and Mission

Monthly Meetings:

3rd Thursday of every month
OPEN to the PUBLIC!
6:30—8:30pm

October 16

November 20

December 18

Mission:

To effectively address and present the concerns of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered citizens of Seattle to the Mayor, City Council, and all City Departments.

Members:

Apply to the Commission!

<http://www.seattle.gov/scsm/>

Eileen Terry, *co-chair*

etw@aol.com

Charles Butler, *co-chair*

charlie@thebutlerlawgroup.com

Aurea Astro

David Beard

Joseph Daniels

Lillie Cridland

Joseph Siddiq, *Get Engaged*

Allena Gabosch

Beth Gappert

James Haydu

Shelley Ho

Mauraan Schultz

Dave Iseminger

Domestic Violence in the LGBT Community: Legal Ramifications and Truth

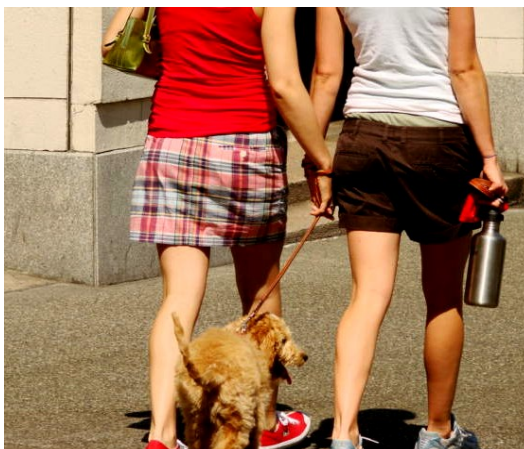
By Beth Gappert, Commissioner

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month, so it seems appropriate to look at Washington's domestic violence laws and how they impact same-sex couples. While statistics indicate that men are far more likely to perpetrate domestic violence against women, same-sex couples are not immune from domestic violence. In fact, same-sex couples experience domestic violence in their relationships at about the same percentage rate that heterosexual couples do – approximately one in four same-sex couples will experience some form of domestic violence in their relationships.

Domestic violence is a broad category of behavior. It isn't simply a heated argument or a rough patch in a relationship. Domestic violence is a pattern of behavior that is used by a perpetrator to exert control over his or her victim. The behavior may vary in degree of severity, and may include public and private humiliation, property destruction, injuring pets, controlling access to money, threats, physical violence, isolation from friends and family, and stalking. In same-sex couples, the perpetrator may threaten to "out" the victim to control the victim's behavior. This behavior usually is not evident in the beginning of a relationship, but as the relationship grows, the behavior becomes more controlling.

Domestic violence crimes are crimes that are committed by one "family or household member" against another. Crimes may include harassment (threats to injure or kill), property destruction, assault (ranging from pushing to punching to rape to assaults with weapons), burglary, stalking, and violation of no-contact orders. Washington law defines "family or household member" for the purpose of protecting domestic violence victims, using gender-neutral language. The legal definition of "family or household member" is: spouses, former spouses, persons who have a child in common regardless of whether they have been mar-

ried or have lived together at any time, adult persons related by blood or marriage, adult persons who are presently residing together or who have resided together in the past, persons sixteen years of age or older who are presently residing together or who have resided together in the past and who have or have had a dating relationship, persons sixteen years of age or older with whom a person sixteen years of



Domestic Violence: The invisible epidemic

age or older has or has had a dating relationship, and persons who have a biological or legal parent-child relationship, including stepparents and stepchildren and grandparents and grandchildren.

Revised Code of Washington 10.99.020(3).

Same-sex couples are not specifically addressed in the definition of family or household member, but the gender-neutral language in the statute provides protection for same-sex couples. By including "adult persons who are presently residing together or who have resided together in the past," the Washington State Legislature granted protection for same-sex couples that live together but may want to remain closeted.

When the police are called to respond to a domestic violence crime, they are required by law to arrest the person that they deem

to be the primary aggressor in certain circumstances. If the officer has probable cause to believe that an assault has occurred within the last four hours, or that a perpetrator has violated a domestic violence no-contact order, the police must arrest the perpetrator. In the City of Seattle Municipal Courts and the King County Courts, a perpetrator must face a judge before he or she may be released from jail.

This guarantees some protection to the victim – the perpetrator's overnight stay in jail may be enough time for the victim to pack, get out of town, and find safety. It also guarantees that a judge will be able to issue a no-contact order, protecting the victim, and order a perpetrator to surrender any firearms he or she may own.

Many victims do not want to the police involved in their relationships, and this is especially evident in same-sex couples. Often, victims of same-sex domestic violence are afraid that the police will not treat them fairly, that the criminal justice system is inherently homophobic, or that they will be "outed" if they call the police. If a victim of domestic violence chooses not to call the police, there are other options available to protect the victim, including protective orders, shelters, and support groups. If you believe that you are a victim of domestic violence, please seek assistance. If you have been the victim of a crime or believe that you are in danger and need help immediately, call 911. In the Seattle area, help is also available through Northwest Network, www.nwnetwork.org, Gay Men's Domestic Violence Project, www.gmdvp.org, or through the King County Protection Order Advocacy Program (206) 296-9547. Other resources may be found on the City of Seattle's Commission for Sexual Minorities website, www.seattle.gov/scsm, and the City of Seattle's Law Department website, www.seattle.gov/law/domestic_violence.



Q-HOUR is Q-Munity Connections

Oct 9 * 5:30 * Café Metropolitan



FTM 2008: A Gender Odyssey Concludes Sixth Successful Year

Aurea Astro, Commissioner



Another Gender Odyssey has come and gone leaving five hundred transgender individuals and their friends freshly equipped with a national network, new conceptions of gender and a renewed sense of self. A participant for the third consecutive year, I am continually impressed with the level of sophistication of conference attendees, as well as the professional planning apparent behind

Gender Odyssey's annual conception.

Twenty-five different one hour sessions provided a dependable, albeit unpredictable buffet of discussions and lectures, from *Holistic Transitioning: No Regrets*, to *Testosterone 101*. Sexual reassignment surgery is given due diligence, as renown surgeons fly in from across the country to present on chest reconstruction, bottom surgery and hysterectomies. Those post-operative or uninterested will find their niche within discussions on transgender parenting or negotiating the gay male scene without a penis.

A smattering of events adds levity to the daily series of lectures, with films, BBQ's and, of course, an (in)famous play-party at Seattle's *Wetspot*.

But the crux of the event—in my opinion—was this year's exceptional keynote speaker. Eli Stone, a disabled transsexual male, poet and author, offered a rousing speech on the prevalence of shame in the transgender community and its irrevocable marriage to public health and social justice.

Shame, especially potent within the politics of both disability and "gender dysphoria," was a running theme in Mr. Stone's speech. He asks, "Why this inconsolable sense of wrong? What's wrong with me? What's wrong? *Wrong?*"

Asking what's wrong with us is identifying defects, which is turn is loaded with pity and anger and too often prevents unique-bodied individuals from pursuing healthcare and

social justice. To a round of applause Stone asserts, "We need to end able-ism instead of trying to make our bodies fit."

Unfortunately, as Stone laments, "social justice politics will never be enough to resist shame," but encourages us to feel hope as a social landscape which determines conceptions of natural and defective changes.

As with the conclusion of each Gender Odyssey, I am incredulous at the newfound sense of pride I have in Seattle and confidence in myself. I moved to Seattle because I saw Capitol Hill as an urban haven of protection for those on the fringe of the

"We need to end able-ism instead of trying to make our bodies fit"

gay and lesbian community. I knew that being transgender would be problematic socially and economically, but felt that Seattle's politically liberal landscape and *Cheers*-like LGBT gathering spaces (Wildrose, Neighbors, Seattle Counseling Services, Cal Anderson) made for a safe landing.

Mayor Nickels marked the week preceding Gender Odyssey "Trans Awareness Week," advertised the Gay Softball World Series, and unabashedly appears each PRIDE parade. This illustrates an impressive awareness and ethos from the top.

At the same time, people ask me which transportation initiative "Trans Awareness" refers to (did Nickels cleverly know that would happen?), the Pacific Place bathroom incident is still mortifying, trannies share hormones, homos get attacked, lesbians are humiliated at Safeco and same-sex couples are denied the right to marriage.

Gender Odyssey attracts some of the queerest from around the country. I hope that Seattle has the determination for diversity and capacity for inclusiveness to make them want to stay.



Continued from page 1... **Health**

offers a better glimpse at LGB health in King County and calls for more research to understand and address disparities.

City of Seattle Commission for Sexual Minorities:
<http://www.seattle.gov/scsm/>

Health Disparities full report:
<http://seattle.gov/scsm/documents/LGBTReportFinal12-17-07.pdf>

To read more about the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey:
<http://www.cdc.gov/brfss/>

The commission will host a community forum on this report and other health research conducted in the LGBT community to get at the question, "How Healthy Are We?" Please check back at our website regularly for an announcement.

Continued from page 2... **Beth**

in my home state, in my home country. I want to be able to marry my partner and know that we would have the same protections and responsibilities that straight married couples have. I figured that starting

here, in Seattle, influencing policy and educating local government officials would be one way for me to help promote marriage equality. While I know that our city officials can't issue marriage licenses, I hope that their exposure to these issues will infiltrate their interactions with county and state governments.

I enjoy serving on the Commission. The work that we do promotes equality for all LGBTQ people, and I am proud to be a part of that. And, if you're interested in serving on the commission or know of anyone who might, let me know!